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A 1762 Button Gwinnett Surprises Yale and Donor

witness my hand
Button Gwinnett

Signature of Button Gwinnett found at Yale University.

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Special to the Herald Tribune
NEW HAVEN, Conn., June 23. —Through chance and the generosity of an alumnus, Yale University has acquired a receipt signed by Button Gwinnett, whose signature is considered the rarest among the signers of the Declaration of Independence.

The document was among family papers dating back to the period of the American Revolution which were given to Yale by Craig Colgate jr., of Bethesda, Md. It was discovered while the papers were being sorted at the Yale Library. Mr. Colgate had not known the receipt was among them.

Notified of the discovery, Mr. Colgate reaffirmed it as a gift to Yale. Fewer than fifty specimens of Gwinnett's writing are known to exist, and only four of these are more than mere signatures. One Gwinnett autograph sold for \$14,000 in 1924.

The Yale document reads: "Recd. october 12th. 1762 of Mr. Ben Davies One hundred and seven pounds fourteen shillings & seven pence in Ballance of all Accounts as witness my hand—New York /s/ Button Gwinnett."

Born in Gloucestershire, England, about 1735, Gwinnett came to America and settled in Georgia as a merchant and planter. He served as a member of the Georgia Colonial Assembly and briefly in 1777 as "President of the State of Georgia." In the same year, he was fatally wounded in a duel. The importance of the Yale document is increased by the fact that it locates Gwinnett in America six months earlier than any previous record.